

Message Text

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73

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 171115Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 301

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, NP

SUBJECT: CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS COMMISSION TO BE ESTABLISHED

1. IN HIS CONSTITUTION DAY ADDRESS DEC 16 KING BIRENDRA ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO SET UP A COMMISSION TO DISCUSS AND RECOMMEND APPROPRIATE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS. THE KING STATED "PANCHAYAT POLITY IS PEOPLE ORIENTED AND TIME REQUIRES THAT PANCHAS AT ALL LEVELS PLAY INCREASED ROLE IN KEEPING WITH POPULAR ASPIRATIONS. WE HAVE ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS POINTED OUT THAT TIMELY REFORMS CAN BE MADE IN SYSTEM IN PURSUIT OF GOALS WHICH IT HAS SET FOR ITSELF. I HAVE THEREFORE DECIDED TO SET UP COMMISSION SOON TO DISCUSS AND RECOMMEND APPROPRIATE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS KEEPING IN VIEW FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES AND DYNAMIC CHARACTER OF PANCHAYAT SYSTEM IN ORDER TO MAKE PANCHAS MORE ACTIVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH WISHES OF PEOPLE."

2. COMMENT: THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS FOR SOME TIME OF REFORMS IN PANCHAYAT SYSTEM, WITH SPECULATION THAT MODERATE REFORM ACTIONS MIGHT BE ANNOUNCED PRIOR TO CORONATION TO SOFTEN OPPOSITION BY DISSIDENT GROUPS. DURING HIS VISIT TO NEPAL LAST WEEK, AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO INDIA, BRUCE GRANT, WAS TOLD BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER BISTA THAT PALACE COMMITTEE HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED TO STUDY REFORMS, BUT THAT ACTION

WOULD NOT BE TAKEN UNTIL AFTER CORONATION. BISTA DID NOT SAY WHAT REFORMS WOULD BE, BUT IMPLIED THEY WOULD BE IN DIRECTION OF MORE DIRECT PARTICIPATION BY PEOPLE IN ELECTORAL PROCESS. HE SAID THAT KING WOULD HAVE "TO LISTEN" AND THAT HE EXPECTED THAT KING WOULD NOT OPPOSE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS RECOMMENDED BY PALACE GROUP. STATEMENT BY KING IN HIS CONSTITUTION DAY ADDRESS CONFIRMS THAT PALACE HAS BEGUN TO LOOK AT REFORMS IN PANCHAYAT SYSTEM. WE ARE NOT CERTAIN, HOWEVER, WHETHER PALACE COMMITTEE AND REFORM COMMISSION ARE ONE AND THE SAME. IN ANY EVENT NO INFORMATION HAS YET BEEN MADE PUBLIC ON COMMISSION'S COMPOSITION OR TIMETABLE FOR REPORT. BOTH WILL BE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN ASSESSING LIKELIHOOD OF MEANINGFUL AND TIMELY REFORMS.

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